

BET TZEDEK PRO BONO CLINIC OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to offering a number of opportunities for attorneys to provide direct representation services to low-income clients facing a variety of legal issues, Bet Tzedek Legal Services offers various pro bono clinic opportunities open to attorneys and non-attorneys. If you or your firm have any questions regarding any of the opportunities listed below, please feel free to contact Bet Tzedek's Pro Bono Clinics Coordinator, Rachael Ettinger, at rettinger@bettzedek.org.

Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic

When a severely developmentally disabled child turns 18, s/he retains all the legal rights of an adult even though s/he is cognitively unable to exercise those rights. Many families are not aware they need a conservatorship when the child turns 18 in order to make important decisions for their disabled child, including fundamental decisions such as where the child will live or what medical treatment they will receive. In other instances, family members find themselves suddenly needing to provide extensive care and assistance to an elderly loved one facing dementia, Alzheimer's, or other conditions which prevent the loved one from caring for him or herself. These family members may also need to initiate a conservatorship case. Bet Tzedek Legal Services helps families navigate the conservatorship court process through free self-help conservatorship clinics.

Individuals who volunteer at our clinic have the opportunity to screen litigants for income and subject matter eligibility, help litigants complete a questionnaire to secure the information necessary for their court paperwork, and in some instances help the litigant prepare the necessary court forms.

Clinics are held Monday and Thursday from 9:00 AM to 12 noon at the downtown Los Angeles Law Library. Clinics are also held on Tuesdays in Norwalk, and on Fridays in Long Beach and Lancaster.

Volunteers are prepared by watching a 20 minute, online training video or by attending a one-hour MCLE eligible training at your firm or office. The opportunity is open to attorneys and non-attorney staff, and there is no expectation of any ongoing representation or responsibility to the clients assisted.

Family Preparedness Clinics

Our community faces the possibility of an unprecedented crisis, with thousands of children at risk of being left without anyone with the legal authority to enroll the child in school or authorize medical treatment in the event that their undocumented parents are removed from the country. In partnership with various other legal services agencies, Bet Tzedek has developed a Family Preparedness Know Your Rights presentation designed to inform parents about the steps they need to take to ensure their child's safety, well-being, and care should they be removed from the United States.

In addition to the presentations, Bet Tzedek is holding document drafting clinics for those parents interested in having documents such as a Caregiver's Affidavit drafted on their behalf. These clinics are being held at various community locations throughout Los Angeles County, and are supplemented by regularly held clinics at Bet Tzedek's offices.

Bet Tzedek cannot do this alone. We seek volunteers, both attorneys and individuals willing to serve as translators, to sit down with families to help draft these documents. Volunteers will be trained via a one hour MCLE training. There is no expectation of any ongoing representation or responsibility to the clients assisted.

Bet Tzedek – the House of Justice

Advance Planning Clinic

End-of-life planning, if ignored, can go from an informative and straightforward conversation to a drawn-out nightmare. Low-income clients often have little resources or time to devote to end-of-life planning, and therefore they frequently resort to “no planning” or improvised planning. Having recognized the need for this critical service, Bet Tzedek has created the Advance Planning Clinic.

At these clinics, volunteer attorneys meet with clients in order to draft:

- Advance Health Care Directives: A document designating an agent and outlining the client’s health care instructions to be followed should they become incapacitated.
- Statutory Wills: A simple will outlining the client’s testamentary wishes.

Bet Tzedek hosts these clinics at its offices on Wilshire Blvd., and provides a 2 hour online or in person MCLE-eligible training to prepare volunteers for their clinic experience. There is no expectation of any ongoing representation or responsibility to the clients assisted.

Name and Gender Marker Change Petition Clinics

Since the election, there has been an increased sense of urgency in the transgender community about securing identity documents that reflect their identities. In response, Bet Tzedek is using a clinic model to assist clients with completing petitions and providing information on this process.

Volunteers who join us for this clinic will have the opportunity to meet with the clients, review their options regarding name and gender marker changes, and, if requested by the client, assist the client in drafting the name and gender marker change petitions.

Volunteers are trained via a MCLE eligible training module. The MCLE covers education and sensitivity training on gender identity; the process for filing name and/or gender marker change petitions in Los Angeles Superior Court; applying for fee waivers; updating federal and state identity documents; and special considerations for undocumented immigrants, people with criminal records, and individuals under 18. There is no expectation of any ongoing representation or responsibility to the clients assisted.

Small Claims Clinic

In 2009, Bet Tzedek partnered with Greenberg Glusker, the Los Angeles County Bar Association, HIV/AIDS Legal Services Alliance, and the Center for Civic Mediation (formerly Dispute Resolution Services) to launch a Small Claims Workshop. Designed in consultation with the LA Superior Court's Small Claims Court, these free workshops assist people who have filed, who are considering filing, or who are defending small claims actions. The workshops provide detailed information on small claims procedures, ranging from what cases are appropriate for Small Claims Court to how to draft, file, and serve a complaint, to how to prepare for and persuasively present a case at trial.

The workshops are held in the evening on the second Thursday of each month at Southwestern Law School, and consist of two parts: From 6:00 – 7:00 p.m., two attorneys conduct an oral presentation with the assistance of PowerPoint which covers provides basic information regarding Small Claims Court and an overview of mediation and the services provided by the Center for Civic Mediation. Beginning at 7:00 p.m., one-on-one meetings are held between volunteers and participants in order to answer participants’ questions. There is no expectation of any ongoing representation or responsibility to the clients assisted.